



**TO THE SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE  
23<sup>rd</sup> February 2010 – The Council Chamber, Central Bedfordshire Council, Dunstable**

Cllrs J N Young (Chairman), A R Bastable (Vice Chairman), D J Gale,  
Mrs R B Gammons, J Kane, Ms C Maudlin, Mrs M Mustoe, P Snelling and P Williams

(Named Substitutes: Cllrs: Mrs C F Chapman MBE, P A Duckett, M Gibson,  
Ms A M W Graham and A Shadbolt)

**Dear Councillors,**

**Re: Item 10 - GYPSY AND TRAVELLER DEVELOPMENT PLAN DOCUMENT (DPD) for  
CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE NORTH -  
HENLOW PARISH COUNCIL'S COMMENTS ON SITE 38, HENLOW CAMP -  
Land East of A6001, Hitchin Road and opposite the RAF Henlow Camp:**

Henlow Parish Council has discussed the above and they wish to make to following comments as to why they think this site is unsuitable for the provision of Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation:

- 1) Surface Water Drainage Problems: The site slopes towards the A6001 on its western boundary, with a mature hawthorn hedge and drainage ditch between the site and the highway. All the surface water draining off the site and other land to the east runs into the ditch, which flows north to Henlow Village as far as Middlefield Lane. Here it is piped under the highway and flows west towards the airfield, turning right and north again. The watercourse nearest the potential site is very narrow with a series of culverts under access roads, all small in diameter and prone to blocking during and after rainfall. This causes flooding on other agricultural land further downstream. Presumably hard standings would have to be formed. The Internal Drainage Board have stated that no direct drainage would be allowed into the ditch, and this would have to be via a balancing lake or other means stored on site, and discharged over a long period of time. We understand that this would have to be discharged at the Greenfield rate of 3 litres per second which would add considerably to the cost of developing this site. Would this be appropriate use of funds if another site could be found without the need for this additional expenditure? There is a history of flooding usually caused by continuous rain or something as simple as blockage from foliage or litter, and additional surface water run off from the proposed site will certainly increase flood risk to properties in Hitchin road.
- 2) Noise pollution: The proposed encampment would suffer from noise pollution from helicopters and light aircraft, the site being directly under the existing flight path used by the Police Air Support Unit, and adjacent to the Henlow Flying Club's airstrip west of the A6001, at RAF Henlow. The site also adjoins Derwent Lower School.

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- 3) Flooding: Part of the site suffers from flooding at regular periods making it surely unsuitable for the provision of Gypsy and Traveller accommodation, with ponding to the centre of the site.
- 4) Use of Agricultural Land: The site is approximately 7 acres (twice as large as a recently submitted planning application for 29 dwellings in Henlow) – how can Central Bedfordshire Council justify taking this amount of agricultural land out of production for 10 new pitches. Is future ‘expansion’ envisaged?
- 5) Schools in Henlow and Henlow Camp: Capacity in the Henlow Schools is at saturation point. Raynsford VC Lower School is full and are unable to take in any more pupils. Henlow VC Middle School is full with older age groups oversubscribed, and Derwent Lower School reception ages are also oversubscribed – they would all have difficulty in accommodating any further increase in pupils.
- 6) Doctors Surgeries: Are at saturation point in Stondon, Stotfold, Shefford, and Langford. Paragraph 3.4 of Agenda Item 10 (page 21) states there are three GP’s in the local surgery and that there appears capacity within the NHS guidelines of ‘target of around 1800 per GP’. With a list size of 5360 at the surgery this equates to 1787 per GP if there were three. However with two full time GP’s, plus one GP working mornings only and another one working just one day a week this equates to 2.7 GP’s to the surgery, and 1985 patients per GP – exceeding the NHS target. Whilst we appreciate that there are no absolute upper limits on the number of patients per doctor, any further development would only exasperate this current desperate situation.
- 7) Safety Issue: Access to the site, which is approximately 50 metres from the school entrance, will cross the footpath. Vehicles emerging from the site will have to negotiate children walking to and from Derwent Lower School, parents and service vehicles driving in and out. There is no provision for parking outside of the school gates.
- 8) Foul Sewer: There is currently no provision on or near the site for the disposal of foul sewage into an Anglian Water sewer system. The existing sewer on Hitchin road terminates 790 metres from the site and is problematic in its operation. Sewage from adjacent RAF property is treated at a separate and private sewage plant owned by the MOD. Therefore extensive alterations would have to be made to the current sewer or private sewage treatment would have to be carried out on site, adding considerable cost to the development.
- 9) Wild Life: Birds of conservation concern (Red Status) have been identified on the proposed site. These include:  
Lapwing, winter flocks and nesting pairs in spring/summer. Lapwings have been seen to winter ground roost overnight on this site.

Skylark, Summer flight with distinctive flight song and ground nesting on this site.

Corn Bunting, regularly seen on site in winter and summer. Visually identified and confirmed by distinctive song voice.

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Fieldfare winter flocks regularly (easily) seen on this site usually from October to April.

Linnet winter and summer regularly seen and nest on site in boundary hedgerows.

Grey Partridge winter and summer, despite the efforts of local foxes, these birds are regularly seen and have nested on this site. (Nesting site location withheld).

Above is just a selection of the rarer of the birds, many others thrive on this site and the surrounding farm land. The surrounding farm and land owners have for some years actively promoted wild life which has created a remarkable habitat that has adapted to the crop rotation and farming methods employed on the land area along the A6001 Henlow to the RAF camp. Human occupation of the proposed site will see most all wildlife disappear on site and on bordering farmland.

The above site was rejected at Task Force on 7<sup>th</sup> December 2009, after a number of the above concerns were raised. Henlow Parish Council maintains that the reasons for initially rejecting this site are still valid, and it will be very difficult and expensive to overcome the problems raised. Because of the wish to replace the land at New Road, Clifton the five highest scoring sites have been revisited, and are listed in paragraph 3.2 of Agenda Item 10 (page 20). Of these five sites the Henlow Camp site scored the lowest.

Development of any kind in Hitchin Road has previously been rejected on the grounds of unacceptable development in the countryside, and the last new property built in Hitchin Road in 1988 was subject to Agricultural Occupancy only. More recent development in Middlefield Close was conversion of redundant barns. Surely to develop on this agricultural land would be contrary to the Council's own policy.

We therefore respectfully request that SITE 38, HENLOW CAMP - Land East of A6001, Hitchin Road and opposite the RAF Henlow Camp is rejected by Sustainable Communities Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

Yours sincerely

Bert Schrier  
Clerk to Henlow Parish Council